

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
6 September 1966

State Department review
completed

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HIGHLIGHTS

Buddhist Institute leaders, in a move apparently confirming their opposition to the upcoming elections, have announced that they will lead a hunger strike on the three days prior to the 11 September election.

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Light contact has been reported between allied and Communist forces in Operation SEWARD in Phu Yen Province and Operation NAPA/LIEN KET 56 in Quang Tin Province (Paras. 1-2). South Vietnamese Operation DAN CHI 261 ended yesterday after nearly four days of successful fighting in which 376 Viet Cong were killed (Para. 3). The US search-and-destroy Operation EL PASO III ended after insignificant results in Binh Long Province (Para. 4).

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II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Buddhist Institute leaders reiterated their opposition to the Ky government and to the election today, and announced that they would lead a 72-hour hunger strike in protest of the election (Paras. 1-2). The hunger strike will also be a form of prayer for the life of Tri Quang,

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Despite two antielection incidents by the Viet Cong in Saigon today, some government officials feel that Communist terrorism during the election period will not be too serious (Para. 5).

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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:

[redacted] sea infiltration efforts in the area of the Demilitarized Zone (Paras. 1-2).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:

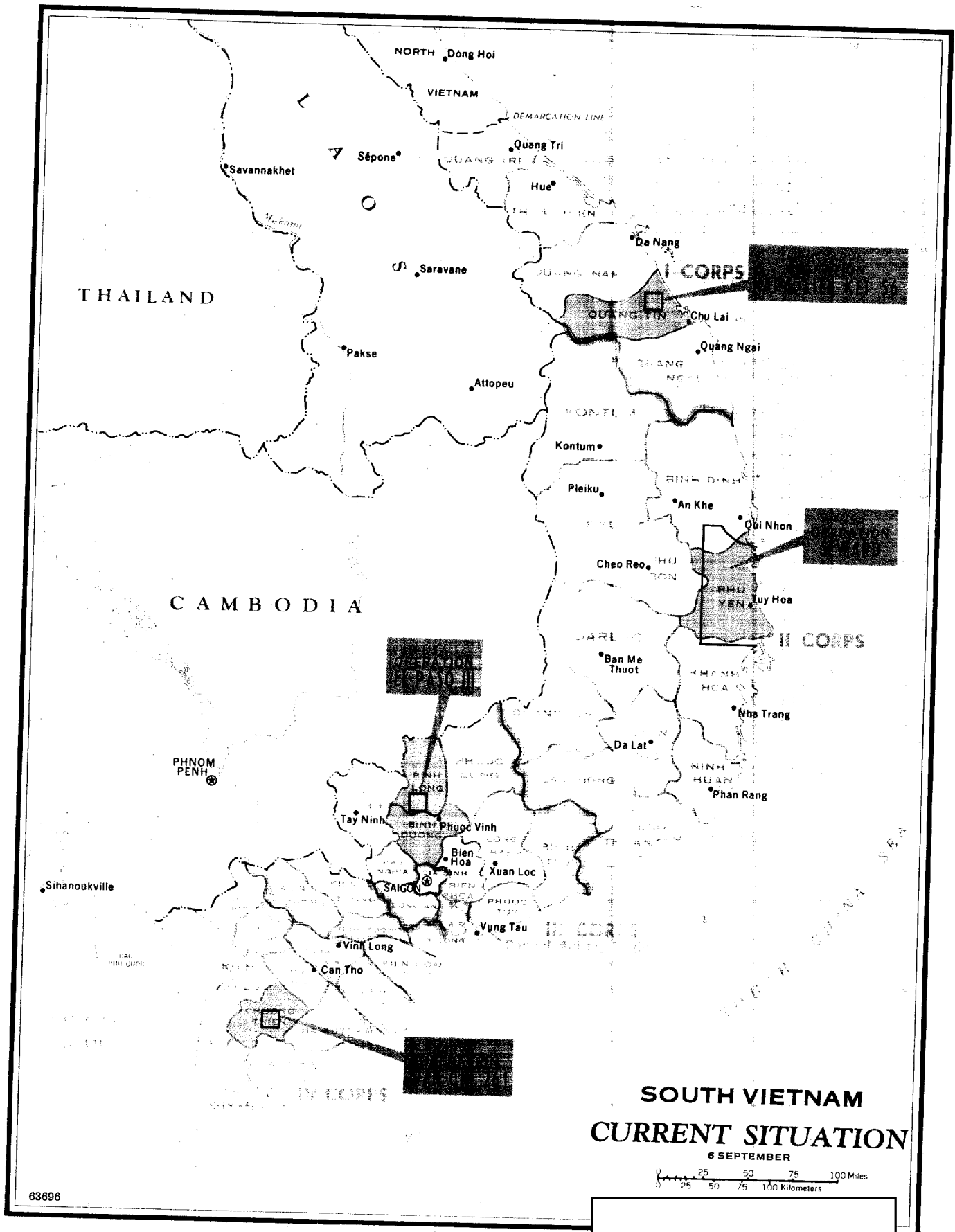
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments:

Polish officials have discussed the Vietnam situation and Poland's role in it in an unusually frank and friendly conversation with the US ambassador (Paras. 1-3). Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi's remarks to a Japanese delegation as reported by Western press services are discussed (Paras. 4-6).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Light contact between Communist troops and US forces participating in the four-battalion search-and-destroy Operation SEWARD in coastal Phu Yen Province was reported today. Six Americans were wounded, and a total of 13 enemy troops were killed and one captured in the five-hour engagement.

2. The joint US - South Vietnamese Operation EL PASO/LIEN KET 56, which began on 4 September in the eastern portion of Quang Tin Province, has been renamed Operation NAPA/LIEN KET 56. Light contact has been reported in this operation with US Marine forces suffering two killed and six wounded. Enemy losses included eight killed and seven captured.

3. The South Vietnamese Army Operation DAN CHI 261, conducted in the delta province of Chuong Thien, ended yesterday after three and one half days of fighting. Friendly losses were 21 killed and 73 wounded. Viet Cong losses included 376 killed, 37 captured, and 190 weapons and 12 tons of ammunition and supplies captured.

4. Search-and-destroy Operation EL PASO III, conducted in Binh Long Province north of Saigon by one battalion of the US 1st Infantry Division, has ended after having made insignificant contact with Viet Cong forces. One American soldier was wounded in the operation which began on 5 August. No enemy casualties were reported.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. At a press conference today in Saigon, Buddhist Institute leaders announced that they would lead a 72-hour hunger strike beginning 8 September in protest of the government's constitutional assembly election of 11 September. A communiqué, signed by acting Institute chairman Thien Thien Hoa, also demanded an interim government, called for "noncooperation" in the election, and denounced the assembly to be elected. Other documents, including telegrams of protests previously sent to President Johnson and UN Secretary General Thant, were released to newsmen at the conference.

Thien Hoa also made some strong anti-American remarks, blaming the US among other things for escalating the conflict in Vietnam.

2. Today's press conference appears to settle once and for all the position of the Buddhist Institute on the elections. There have been recent indications that Institute council members were reconsidering their earlier call for an election boycott, and that there were some differences between acting chairman Thien Hoa and vice chairman Thich Phap Tri. Today, however, Phap Tri read the communiqué signed by Thien Hoa to the press gathering in a public display of unity.

3. The 72-hour hunger strike will also be observed as a form of prayer for Tri Quang, whose condition the communiqué described as "critical."

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Viet Cong Terrorism in the Saigon Area

4. According to the press, Viet Cong terrorists blew up a polling place in a hamlet on the northern outskirts of Saigon this afternoon (Saigon time). There were no injuries reported. One bystander was injured in the Cholon district, however, when a Viet Cong agent tossed a grenade at a loudspeaker truck during a political rally today.

5. Despite such incidents, a Vietnamese security official in the capital area feels that the over-all level of Viet Cong terrorism will not be unmanageable. Moreover, Chief of State Thieu told Ambassador Lodge today that Viet Cong activities "apparently are not going to be too serious." Thieu said that the terrorism in Saigon thus far was not out of proportion to that which had occurred on special occasions in the past.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] substantial waterborne logistics effort was under way by enemy forces both slightly to the north and south of the Demilitarized Zone. Activity in the restricted zone south of the DMZ in South Vietnamese waters was heaviest during the week of 21-27 August.

2. Hanoi's use of small coastal craft and sampans in this area underscores the large logistic effort probably intended to reinforce the 324th NVA Division and other as yet unidentified North Vietnamese forces operating near or in the DMZ. There have also been numerous reports of DRV logistic efforts across the DMZ over trails, recently improved roads, and across the Ben Hai River. Recently captured documents indicate that most of the supplies for the 324th Division have come from North Vietnam. This has also been corroborated by recent prisoner reports. Daily US air strikes in this area are producing numerous secondary explosions and fires and are destroying or damaging a large number of trucks.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. In an unusually frank and friendly conversation with US Ambassador Gronouski on 1 September, Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Winiewicz again stressed Warsaw's willingness to "do all it can" to end the Vietnam conflict, but reiterated that Hanoi is suspicious of the Poles for the role they played in last January's US peace initiative. Winiewicz stated flatly that he is convinced that the war would end in 1967 since otherwise he would have to conclude that "every leader in the world was out of his mind." Responding to Gronouski's query concerning Hanoi's inflexibility on point three of its four points, Winiewicz noted that the Poles were "working hard" on a reformulation acceptable to both Hanoi and the US.

2. Noting that the Eastern European countries "would rejoice" if the USSR made a move for peace in Vietnam, Winiewicz stated that Soviet caution stems from the Sino-Soviet struggle for influence in Asia. Stressing that this struggle is essentially between those who believe in "peaceful coexistence" and those who do not, Winiewicz implied that this conflict is mirrored in the domestic politics of Poland and probably other Communist regimes.

3. Despite Winiewicz' optimism on the prospects for a Vietnamese settlement and his pledge of Polish cooperation with US efforts to this end, there is no evidence as yet that the Poles have any new information leading them to believe that Moscow, Hanoi, or the National Liberation Front may now be more receptive to peace moves than they have been in the past. Warsaw's optimism, however, does follow what is believed to have been a review of the Vietnamese situation by the Poles in recent weeks, and may pre-
sage a renewed Polish willingness actively to seek a solution. Neither Winiewicz nor Foreign Minister Rapacki--both of whom will attend the UN General Assembly session--reportedly expect Vietnam to be formally discussed, but Winiewicz specifically stated that useful discussions might be conducted in the halls of the UN. Winiewicz also said that Rapacki would be very interested in seeing Secretary Rusk while in New York.

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Chen Yi Remarks on Vietnam

4. Western news services have quoted Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi as telling a group of visiting Japanese Diet members that China is "not entirely averse" to settling the Vietnam war by negotiation. He made clear, however, that such a settlement would be on Communist terms. Chen Yi claimed that negotiations are impossible "as long as the US is resorting to force in Vietnam" and claimed that there can be no "solution" until all American troops are pulled out of Vietnam. Chen stated that he did not believe that the US would attack China and that the tension between the US and China would not last forever.

5. These remarks sound strange coming from Chen Yi--the Chinese rarely mention the possibility of Vietnam negotiations--and may be a misquote or a misunderstanding resulting from wishful Japanese thinking. However, if the Japanese are reporting Chen accurately, his remarks are another Chinese effort to appear "reasonable" and to throw the onus for the war on the US. Chen still asserted that a solution is possible only if the US withdraws--a long-standing key point in Peking's terms.

6. If Chen Yi was accurately quoted by the press, his remarks would be close to the general North Vietnamese position on talks. Discussions can take place, according to Hanoi, prior to a withdrawal of US troops, but such a pull-out must precede any final "solution" or settlement.

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